

2nd February 2009

The Secretary,
Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration,
Parliament House, Canberra,
Australian Capital Territory. 2601

**Plebiscite for an Australian Republic Bill 2008 —
submission for consideration by the Committee**

Dear Sir,

I understand that the above-mentioned private member's Bill, moved in the Senate by Senator Bob Brown, has been referred to your Committee for consideration; and that the Committee has invited members of the public to submit to it their observations upon the Bill. Would you please ensure that this letter is included with those submissions?

The question proposed by the Bill for answer by the electors at the next general election for the House of Representatives, "Do you support Australia becoming a republic?", does not contain even an outline of any form of "republic" for which the support of the elector is being canvassed. As Senator Brown himself acknowledges, any answers to such a "plebiscite" question, whatever they might be, would have no effect on our Constitution. An answer "yes" could only suggest that something is wrong with our stable and successful Constitution, without offering any proposal at all for putting it right.

At a time of grave disturbance in the financial stability of many countries in the world, including Australia, it is particularly unsuitable that an ineffectual "plebiscite" question of this kind should be put before the electors at the next Federal election. If Senator Brown and any like-minded colleagues of his have a firm proposal for detailed constitutional change which they could propose that the Government should submit to the Australian electorate at a referendum, they should make it, and then seek to obtain Parliamentary approval for such a referendum. The proposal set out in the Bill for a "plebiscite", which contains no substance, should be abandoned.

I look forward to hearing from you that you have received this letter, and that it will be considered in due course by the Committee.

Yours truly,

(C. W. A. Flynn)